

# What do I do with these Records?

## Managing Public Records During a Transition



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This guide was produced by  
the Rhode Island Department of State



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# Overview of Managing Records During Transition

Thank you for your service to the State of Rhode Island!

The State Archives and Public Records Administration oversees records management functions for all state and municipal agencies. This includes advice, assistance, regulation, and consultation.

As a public employee, the records you created and received while at your agency are important public records. Before you move on from state service, your records need to be identified and organized properly. Proper organization and management will ensure that these records remain accessible after your departure from state service.

This guide is intended to serve as a resource, providing step by step instructions for organizing and managing your public records when preparing to leave an agency.

## Things to Know

### **Who is this guide for?**

Any state employee, including general officers, transitioning out of a state agency, to a new state agency or role, or out state service due to term limit, retirement, or other reason.

### **What is Records Management?**

Records management is a comprehensive task encompassing the organization, identification, and handling of all records, regardless of format or media.

### **What is a public record?**

Documents, papers, letters, maps, books, media, or any other material regardless of physical form made or received by any employee of the State of Rhode Island pursuant to law or in connection with the transaction of official business by any agency.

[\(R.I. Gen. Laws § 38-1-1.1\)](#)

### **What is a permanent record?**

Examples of permanent records include, but are not limited to, memos, annual reports, meeting minutes, transition records, successful grant files, project and particular instance files, and reorganizational records.

### **When do I contact the State Archives and Public Records Administration?**

Contact the State Archives and Public Records Administration once you are ready to organize your records and they will provide guidance and the necessary paperwork.

## Where do I start?

- Make a high-level list of the records you have in both physical storage and digital storage.
  - Physical storage may be in boxes, file cabinets, cubicles, or other locations.
  - Digital storage may include shared drives, OneDrive, or other hard drives.



**This first step is a basic, big picture inventory to help you assess.**

- As you complete your list, sort your records.
  - Identify and dispose of non-records. Some examples of non-records include:
    - Extra (duplicate) copies of documents
    - Published reference materials created by agencies outside your own
    - Blank forms
    - Catalogs and professional journals from organizations
    - Glossy brochures from that conference you recently attended
  - Use the approved [Records Retention Schedules](#) to identify records that have enduring value to the state that would be eligible for transfer to the State Archives.



**What is Enduring Value? Enduring value are records that document the actions of an elected official, detail important agency duties, record events of significant public attention or community groups, or are otherwise deemed permanent by the approved retention**

- Identify records that colleagues or successors will require access to in order to continue operations after your transition. Some examples include:
  - Forms
  - Business processes for the agency
  - Agency-wide Policies
  - Ongoing Project files



**Note: Records specific to the initiatives of an Administration should be kept with Administration files and transferred to the State Archives along with all other records.**

- Complete an initial, high-level list and breaking it into three large categories: destruction; archive; and active for a successor, will streamline destruction and description in your next steps.

## Managing your Records

### Getting things Organized

- Identify records that have met their minimum retention requirements and are ready to be destroyed. List these records on a [Certification of Records Destruction form](#) (CRD) as you go.
- File all records not eligible for destruction in folders and boxes with clear and consistent labels. Use *record series* from the Retention Schedules wherever possible.

- What is a *record series*? It is the name of type of record.

All Records Retention Schedules have four main components:

- Record Series Number (*can be divided into sub-series*);
- Record Series Title;
- Description of record series; and
- Retention Period.

AG1.8	Public Utilities Commission – Utilities Required Filings	B
A	The Commission's inter-office policy requires public utilities to issue reports detailing conservation and load management and integrated resource plans. The records consist of filings to effectuate these reports, testimony, pleadings, discovery, exhibits, correspondence, and research.	C
	Retention: Retain three (3) years.	D

- When boxing records, do not overfill or they will be difficult to carry or move. Full boxes may weigh more than 50 lbs.
- Clearly identify on boxes what their disposition will be:
  - For **DESTRUCTION** – Complete a CRD for this box.
  - For **ARCHIVING** – Complete an inventory form or file list for this box.
  - For **SUCCESSORS** – Complete an inventory form or file list for this box.



At any step in this process, if you are unsure of what to do or if what you have is a record, check with your agency Records Officer or contact the Public Records Administration at [records@sos.ri.gov](mailto:records@sos.ri.gov).

- Your records should be kept intact and should neither be added or removed by successors unless eligible for destruction in the future.

## Disposition of your Records

### Preparing to Destroy Eligible Records

- **DESTRUCTION**

Process the records that are eligible for **destruction**. This will clear out space for further organization and clean-up of your records.

- Complete a [Certification of Records Destruction](#) form for all eligible records you have identified.
  - Follow this step-by-step guide online: [Instructions to Complete a CRD](#).
  - When calculating destruction eligibility, do not count the year the record was created.
  - Be careful to observe triggers, such as “after audit,” noted in the retention period in the schedule.



Records cannot be destroyed until the CRD is signed by the Agency Head and then returned to you counter-signed by the State Archivist. The Agency must keep the CRD permanently, even after you’ve left. The CRD becomes the permanent replacement of the record, demonstrating its creation and legal destruction.

- Confirm the items you identified as non-records were accurately categorized. If they are non-records, dispose of them appropriately via recycling or shredding.

- **TRANSFER**

Transfer your remaining records to the proper authority.

- These records should be on your high-level list or on the provided Inventory Form for ease of identification.
- Records that will remain with the Agency and/or be provided to a successor fall into two categories: active and inactive.
- **For Successors**
  - For **active** records:
    - Coordinate with your supervisor, someone within your work unit, or if possible, your successor.
    - If you are unable to coordinate with staff, notify in-house legal counsel of the records and their temporary location.
  - For **inactive**, but not permanent, records
    - Coordinate to send these records into off-site storage until they're eligible for destruction in the future.



**What is an inactive record?** Inactive records are not frequently accessed by you or your agency, and retrieval does not need to be immediate, but the records are not yet eligible for disposal because of administrative, fiscal, or legal requirements.

- Records sent into off-site storage must be identified by their record series and include destruction eligibility dates. Contact the PRA and review the [State Agency Manual](#) to learn more about this process.
- **For Archival (historical) records:**
  - Include inventory information when contacting the State Archives to expedite the review and transfer process. *The State Archives only*

*accepts transfer after review and appraisal. To learn more about this process, the Acquisitions Policy is available upon request.*

- Coordinate to send records to the State Archives.
- Deliver the records to the State Archives and complete the appropriate forms for State Agency Transfer.



**Depending on the volume of records the State Archives may be able to assist in coordinating alternate pick-up options, such as utilizing the state's storage vendor Iron Mountain.**

- The list you made will prove invaluable to the new records custodian regardless of which transfer is appropriate.

## Going Forward

### Why Organize these Records?

- Identifying and sorting your records is vital to assisting the State in continuity of operations as employees transition in and out of their roles.
- The effort to organize your records will ensure your work continues and that the processes, workflows, and standards you established are not lost.
- Proper records identification and management guarantee transparency for the people of Rhode Island and preserves Rhode Island history.

## Helpful Resources

- Public Records Administration Promulgated Regulations
  - <https://rules.sos.ri.gov/regulations/part/100-40-05-1>
- Council of State Archivist Guidance Document
  - [Top Tips for Government Agencies Working with Electronic Records](#)
- [National Governor's Association](#)
  - [First Steps in Managing Records: A Transition Priority](#)
- Approved Records Retention Schedules

- [Records Retention Process](#)
  - [Public Records Administration document library](#)
- Sample Inventory Form
  - [Employee Records Inventory Form](#)
- Public Records Destruction Guidance Document
  - [Educational Resources](#)
- State Records Center Resources
  - <https://www.sos.ri.gov/divisions/frequent-filers/records-management/state-records-center/>